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ABSTRACT

In January 1982, Wytheville Community College (WCC) adopted the English Qualifying Exam (EQE) as its English placement instrument and made the exam mandatory for all students wishing to enter English 101 or 111 after the spring 1982 quarter. A study was conducted to determine the correlation between students' EQE scores and their English 101/111 grades and between EQE scores and the number of times required for WCC students to complete developmental English courses. The Statistical Analysis System was used to compute Pearson's correlation coefficients. The study revealed that there was significant correlation between EQE scores and English 101 and 111 scores, and the number of times required to complete English 01 and 08. Further research was recommended to determine whether selected data on high school transcripts had a higher degree of correlation with English course grades than the EQE scores and to test the appropriateness of current EQE cutoff scores. (AYC)

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WYTHEVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Wytheville, Virginia

A STUDY OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN ENGLISH QUALIFYING
EXAM SCORES AND FRESHMAN/DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH GRADES
AT WYTHEVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Report No. 83-1

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For a number of years, Wytheville Community College sought an assessment instrument that was satisfactory for evaluating whether or not a student was prepared to enter English 101 or 111. WCC has an open admissions policy and enrolls a large number of students who have been out of high school for several years. Consequently, its entering students have a wide range of English skills and many of them are not prepared to enter English 101 or 111. When it is determined that a student is probably not prepared to enter English 101 or 111, he or she is required to take developmental English courses. English 01 (Verbal Studies Laboratory) and English 08 (Reading Improvement) are developmental courses for students who lack preparation in English. These courses are designed to develop basic skills and understandings needed to succeed in college-level courses. They are not offered for college-level credit, are personalized, and may be completed in varying lengths of time.

In January of 1982, WCC adopted the English Qualifying Exam (Revised 1978), developed by the English faculty of the Annandale Campus of Northern Virginia Community College, as its English placement instrument and made the exam mandatory for all students wishing to enter English 101 or 111 after the 1982 Spring Quarter. The primary question which this study addresses is whether or not there is significant correlation between English Qualifying Exam (EQE) scores and subsequent performance in English 101 and 111.

A secondary question which this study addresses is whether or not the EQE is suitable for projecting the number of quarters that will be required for a student to complete developmental English courses. As previously stated, developmental English courses are personalized and consequently completed in varying lengths of time. Some students require only one quarter to complete these courses while others require two quarters or more (only about 5% require more than two quarters). In order to properly plan instructor workloads, instructional administrators need to be able to project the number of quarters each student will require to complete English 01 and 08.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is significant correlation between EQE scores and grades received for the first English course completed at WCC and/or the number of times required for WCC students to complete developmental English courses.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is limited to the computation and analysis of two correlations: (1) correlation of EQE scores and subsequent grades received for the first English course (English 101 or 111) completed at WCC during the 1982 Fall Quarter, and (2) correlation of EQE scores and the number of times required by WCC students to complete developmental English courses (English 01 and 08) during the 1982 Fall Quarter.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is that it will determine if the EQE is suitable for placing students in English 101, 111, and developmental English at WCC. In addition, it will determine whether or not the EQE is suitable for projecting the number of quarters that WCC students will require to complete developmental English courses. If the EQE is suitable for this purpose, it will enable the college to more accurately plan instructor workloads.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. (Null) There is no significant correlation between EQE scores and grades received for English 101 at WCC.

(Alternate) There is significant correlation between EQE scores and grades received for English 101 at WCC.

2. (Null) There is no significant correlation between EQE scores and grades received for English 111 at WCC.

(Alternate) There is significant correlation between EQE scores and grades received for English 111 at WCC.

3. (Null) There is no significant correlation between EQE scores and the number of times required for WCC students to complete English 01.

(Alternate) There is significant correlation between EQE scores and the number of times required for WCC students to complete English 01.

4. (Null) There is no significant correlation between EQE scores and the number of times required for WCC students to complete English 08.

(Alternate) There is significant correlation between EQE scores and the number of times required for WCC students to complete English 08.

METHODOLOGY

The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to compute Pearson's (product-moment) correlation coefficient (r) and thereby show the degree of correlation between the grade received for the first English course completed by WCC students, the number of times required for WCC students to complete developmental English courses, and EQE scores.

The independent variable for both computations was EQE scores. The dependent variable for the first computation was the grade received for the first English course completed at WCC during the 1982 Fall Quarter. The dependent variable for the second computation was the number of times required to complete English 01 and/or 08.

In order to compute the correlation coefficient of EQE scores and English grades, it was necessary to convert letter (alphabetic) grades to numeric values. Therefore, an "A" grade was given the value of four (4), a "B" grade was given the value of three (3), a "C" grade was given the value of two (2), a "D" grade was given the value of one (1), and "F" grades were converted to zeros (0). In the computation of the correlation coefficient of EQE scores and the number of times required to complete English 01 and 08, the following procedure was used. If a student received a grade of "S" (satisfactory completion) at the end of the 1982 Fall Quarter, he or she was assigned a value of one (1). This meant that the student completed the course in one quarter. If a student received a grade of "R" (making progress but needs to reenroll), "U" (unsatisfactory progress), or "W" (withdrawal), he or she was assigned a value of two (2). This meant that it would take the student two (or more) quarters to complete the course (only about 5% of the enrollees require more

than two quarters to complete developmental courses). The numeric values of one (1) and two (2) were then used in the computation formula along with the EQE scores.

The data included as independent variables were collected by WCC Admissions Office personnel from high school transcripts and EQE score sheets and then entered in user fields of each student's record on the Virginia Community College System's Student Information Package (SIP) file by data processing personnel. A locally written computer program was used to extract data from the SIP file, convert data from the grade file, and feed selected data into the SAS software program.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are presented in Tables 1 and 2 which follow.

Table 1

Correlation Coefficient of EQE Scores and Grades Received
for the First English Course Completed at WCC

	<u>r</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>r Required at .05 Level</u>	<u>r Required at .01 Level</u>
ENGLISH 101	.44444	86	.21700	.28300
ENGLISH 111	.44398	141	.17400	.22800

Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient of the EQE scores and the grade(s) received for both English 101 and 111 is further from zero (0) than the r required for significance at the .05 and .01 levels. Therefore, the degree of correlation for each course is considered to be significant at both the .05 and .01 levels. Thus, null hypotheses 1 and 2 are rejected and the corresponding alternate hypotheses are accepted.

Table 2

Correlation Coefficient of EQE scores and the Number of
Times Required for WCC Students to Complete English 01 and/or 08

	<u>r</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>r Required at .05 Level</u>	<u>r Required at .01 Level</u>
ENGLISH 01	-.33769	60	.25460	.33080
ENGLISH 08	-.37701	55	.26610	.34530

Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient of EQE scores and the number of times required to complete English 01 and 08 is further from zero (0) than the r required for significance at both the .05 and .01 levels. Therefore, the degree of correlation for both English 01 and 08 is considered to be significant at both the .05 and .01 levels. Thus, null hypotheses 3 and 4 are rejected and the alternate hypotheses are accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That a study be conducted to determine which has a higher degree of correlation with subsequent performance in developmental and freshman English at WCC: EQE scores or selected data on high school transcripts.
2. That a study be conducted to determine if the current cutoff scores for the EQE are appropriate for deciding if a student should be required to complete developmental English before enrolling in English 101 or 111.

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